

White House

Worship

Pat 12/17/73
By Judith Martin

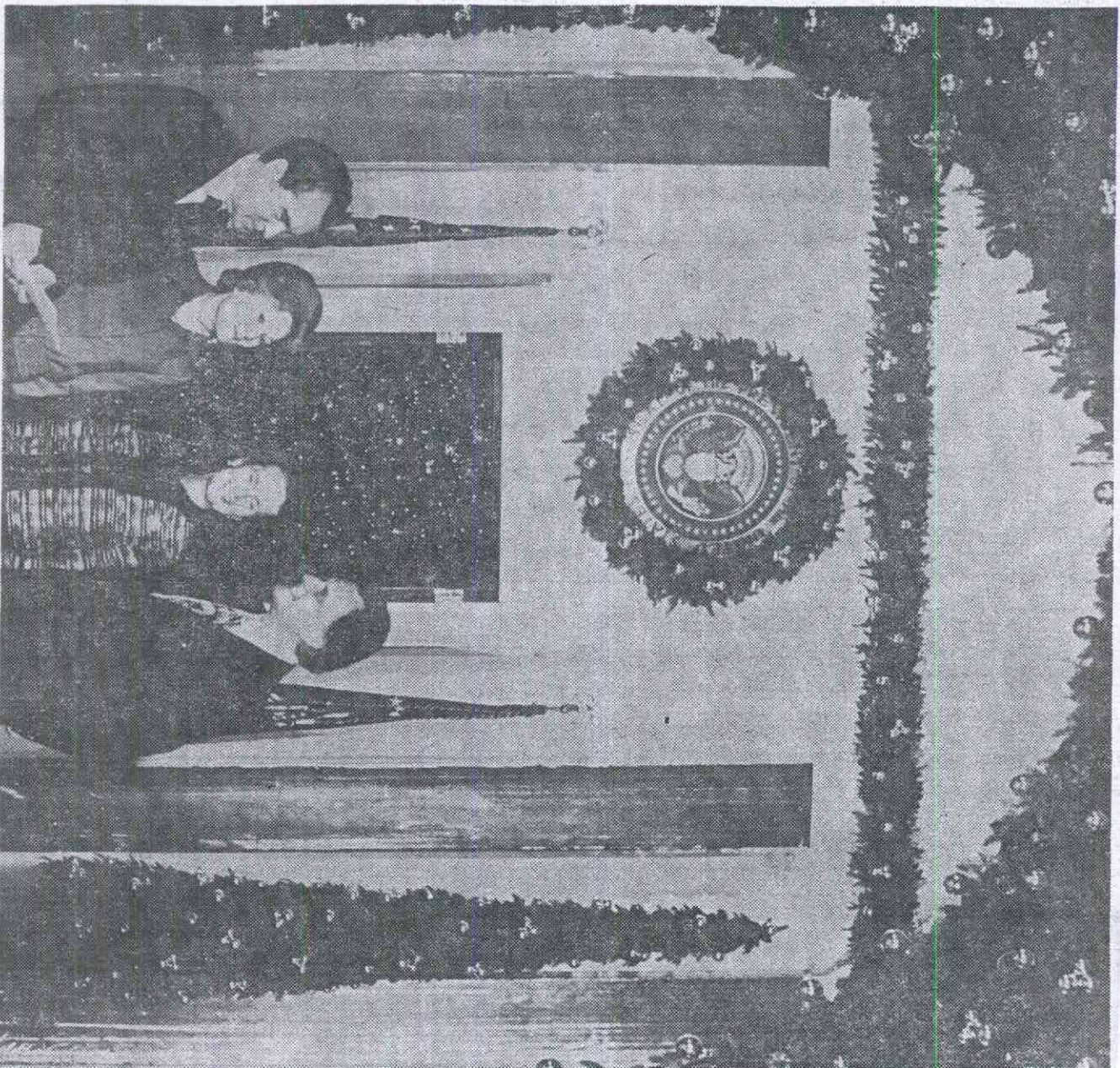
The Rev. Billy Graham, calling himself "just a North Carolina country preacher" who was in "the most distinguished company I've ever been in at Christmas," preached a sermon of repentance yesterday before President and Mrs. Nixon and a congregation of mostly conservative members of Congress.

It was the evangelist's fifth appearance at White House church services in the East Room, and his first since last January. He and Mrs. Graham were the Nixons' houseguests, and accompanied them upstairs when the receiving line after the services had concluded.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I believe America stands on the threshold of divine judgment," Dr. Graham said in his sermon. "Morally, socially, economically, politically and spiritually, we are in deep spiritual trouble."

Speaking of "one of the most convulsive years in American history," he said, "We have turned from God and every month seems to take us further away from the only one who can reverse the tide—forgive our sins and forestall the imminent judgment. We must alter our course if we are to

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President and Mrs. Nixon with the Rev. and Mrs. Billy Graham at the White House Yesterday.

By Joe Helberger—The Washington Post

Sermon of Repentance

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see many more Christmas seasons as a free people.

"We must reorder our priorities. We must remake the unjust structures that have taken advantage of the powerless and broken the hearts of the poor and the dispossessed."

President Nixon said, in introducing Dr. Graham, that "he always leaves us with a message."

"Who should repent?" Dr. Graham asked those assembled. "Everybody. This is what the cross calls for. The heart of its message is simple. Repent or perish. It's as simple as that."

Dr. Graham interrupted one of his crusades in Europe, at the President's special request, to appear at

The printed text of his speech included remarks which he did not speak, that "virtually every European country is undergoing some sort of a crisis that threatens the very foundation of their societies. The symptoms of unrest and trouble are not confined to the United States, they are worldwide. Almost everyone I talk to seems to sense that a hurricane is about to break on the world, of cataclysmic proportions."

He did speak of such events in America as "the death of two former Presidents, the second inauguration of President Nixon, the end of American military involvement in Vietnam, the fury of Watergate, a devas-

tating war in the Middle East which brought the whole world to the brink of Armageddon, and now the energy crisis."

References to Watergate were also made, in response to reporters' questions, by members of the President's family.

His brother, Edward Nixon, called it "a tempest in a teapot."

"Lots of things that should not have happened have been done in every administration, and this administration is no exception," he said.

Julie Nixon Eisenhower, the President's daughter, called Miss Woods "a woman of complete integrity. She would never commit a criminal act."